

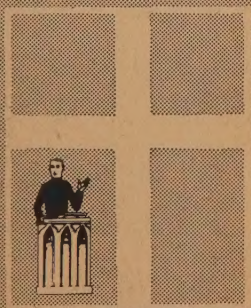
GUIDE

Official Publication of
Paulist Institute for Religious Research

The Concept of The Church in Biblical Thought

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MARCH 1962, No. 166





IT SEEMS TO ME

The Seminary Revisited

"Pastoral Emphasis in Seminary Studies," an article in *The Furrow* for January 1962, is one of the most forthright, constructive criticisms of seminary training to appear in years. The writer is Archbishop Denis E. Hurley, O.M.I., of Durban, South Africa, who is a leading proponent of the new catechetics and a member of the Central Preparatory Commission for the Second Vatican Council.

He contends that while we give the seminarian an adequate "text-book knowledge of the faith in terms of magisterial decrees and scholastic definitions" we fail to fire him with enthusiasm for the Word or impart to him the ability to expound it in attractive and compelling terms to our contemporaries. "There is very little about the average seminary curriculum," asserts this candid missionary archbishop, "that is designed to breed prophets and apostles."

He pleads for far-reaching modifications in the seminary curriculum. Launching the seminarian on studies that would prepare him for a truly missionary and pastoral ministry, the archbishop recommends a major course that would be an initiation into the Mystery of Christ. This course, based on special texts and wide collateral reading, would draw on the immense new insights in the Christian message made available by scriptural, liturgical and doctrinal studies of the last decade. In this way, the seminarian's spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation would be rooted in God's gift to us in Christ. And it would be accompanied by technical training in the art of the preacher and catechist.

Archbishop Hurley has too profound a love for the Church's intellectual tradition to discard her hard won gains in philosophy or theology. But he is too much a realist to ignore the aridities that render sterile so much of our preaching and catechetics. He believes that we can present the authentic Christian message more effectively only if we impart to the seminarians a better comprehension of that message and greater ability to communicate it to others.

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GUIDE, No. 166, March, 1962.

Published 10 times a year (monthly except June-July, August-September when bi-monthly) by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 411 West 59th Street, New York 19, N. Y. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y. Rates 1 year, \$1.00; 10¢ a copy; 5¢ a copy in bulk to Seminarians.

The Concept of the Church in Biblical Thought

By Rev. Barnabas Mary Ahern, C.P., S.S.D.

Biblical scholars today are coming to see that the Church has deep roots in the soil of the New Testament. To many this may seem like the discovery of a truism. It is rather a significant advance on the fire-tried level of scholarship.

It was a previous fashion in some circles to treat the Church as a founding fathered by an ingenious primitive community and laid on the doorstep of an unsuspecting Christ. For Adolph Harnack the gospel was set four-square within the highly personal framework of God the Father, His Providence, man's sonship, and the infinite worth of the human soul. There was little room even for Christ in a gospel like that—much less for the Church. For Albert Schweitzer Jesus' message centered in the imminent breakthrough of the heavenly kingdom by a divine coup d'état. So, too, most other liberal scholars in the first quarter of the present century found it difficult to ascribe to Jesus of Galilee any idea of founding a church.

Today, however, a change is notable. As Anton Fridrichsen has observed, "The discovery of the Church's role in early Christianity is the greatest event within exegetical science in our generation. This is due in great part to the influence of the German Form-Criticism school. Scholars like Rudolph Bultmann and Martin Dibelius have so emphasized the creative power of the primitive community that unwittingly they have made it difficult to accept their parallel thesis on the Church's spontaneous origin. An anonymous source for such a dynamic group as the early Christian community constitutes a vexing problem.

The disciples of Bultmann, therefore, are coming to see why their master has always shown signs of embarrassment when asked

to explain the community itself. The primitive Church is a total anomaly unless one accepts its pristine claim to intimate dependence on the person and ministry of Jesus. It is not surprising, then, that the recent works of Günther Bornkamm and Harald Riesenfeld show the pendulum swinging back to center.

This return is inevitable. The Church looms so large and clear in the apostolic writings that it provides its own best proof of foundations which are solid and deep. When the eminent Pauline scholar Heinrich Schlier became a Catholic a few years ago he wrote, "The insights which led me into the Church developed for me gradually, through my constant appraisal of the New Testament. . . . They furnished me with reasons so powerful that I felt myself impelled and commanded to go off into that strange land in which my real home seemed to lie."

This is the confidence which our Catholic college teachers must possess. They must share Schlier's conviction that the image of the Church is so clear and consistent in

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Through the courtesy of Father Ahern and the officers of The Society of Catholic College Teachers of Sacred Doctrine. From the Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Convention 1961. Published by the Society. Address: Cardinal Cushing College, Brookline 46, Mass. Limitations of space regrettably prevent us from including the invaluable notes and references as well as the questions and discussions that followed Father Ahern's talk.

the apostolic writings that this very image offers perennial proof of deep roots in the earthly life of Jesus.

This does not mean that we are to search the Scripture for anachronisms. The Church is not monolithic; it is living. It has grown from a seedling to a world-wide organization, with a viability which requires adjustment to changing times and places. In the beginning it was a family where everyone knew everyone else, where Peter was a brother among brothers, and where those who had lived with Jesus and spoken with the risen Lord enjoyed prestige and authority everywhere. To seek identity between our local bishops and the "*episcopoi*" of Acts is to seek an anachronism. To look for what is Roman in Peter and to try to square Pope John XXIII with the lean fisherman of Galilee—this is like trying to fit the Roman office of the Passionist Generalate into the little hut where St. Paul of the Cross founded the Congregation in the eighteenth century.

It is not our purpose to search the apostolic writings for anachronisms which we shall never find there. What we are looking for are the basic elements of the Church's organization, the rationale of its disciplinary activity, and the richly eminent source of its divine life and teaching.

THE BASIC ELEMENTS

Let us start at the beginning. Something happened at Pentecost—just as something happened at Sinai—to bring a new people into being. Looking back years later St. Luke illumines the full significance of the event by developing in a highly literary form all the involvements of the coming of the Spirit. His midrashic description of the "tongues of fire," his rich use of the Old Testament prophecies in the Petrine discourse—all this emphasized the truth that on Pentecost itself the followers of Jesus knew clearly that they had received from Him God's own Spirit. The risen Savior, therefore, was truly the messianic Son of God (cf. Acts 13:13) and they His messianic community.

This faith of Pentecost needs no proof. Though the opening chapters of Acts owe much to the insights of Luke and to his power of evoking impressions through a literary use of rabbinical and scriptural themes, this section shows also a consistent fidelity to the spirit and contents of its source

material. Whatever may have been the penetrating power of his own developed theology Luke often presents the thoughts of Peter and Stephen just as they thought them in that first burst of Pentecostal light.

There is a tell-tale tang of primitive Christian thinking in Peter's words when, with full conviction, he announced the ringing challenge: "Let all the house of Israel know most assuredly that God *has made* both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Later Pauline theology with its more careful precision would give an adoptionist color to this formulary. St. Luke, however, lets it stand. This same spirit of originality flavors St. Stephen's discourse in Acts 7. For this witness to the faith, the *risen* Christ is everything while His passion and death are crucial problems calling for apology. The substance of the sermon, therefore, comes from the first days of Christianity, from a level which was not yet enlightened by Paul's profound insight into the real efficacy of Christ's death.

MESSIANIC COMMUNITY

One truth especially emerges from these first pages of Acts. The followers of Jesus believed that the "last days" promised by the prophets had come. He whom they had seen risen from the dead had Himself given them the Spirit of God. He, therefore, was the Messiah; and they were the messianic community.

Their life flowed along smoothly in the channels of Jewry because they looked on themselves as its perfect fulfillment. They felt no sharp cleavage with their own people, since they were simply enjoying the privileges planned for all in Israel who would believe. When after the resurrection they chose Matthias to fill out the number of the twelve apostles, they had in mind that judgment over the twelve tribes which the "last days" would bring. Now that this time had come they recognized themselves as the perfect Israel (Acts 3:24ff). Their sense of having arrived filled these first days with halcyon peace and overflowing joy which left a deep impression on their fellow-Jews (Acts 2:46-47).

Their belief that Jesus had risen from the dead as the messianic Son of God was bound to bring clashes especially with the Sadducees (Acts 4:1-22; 5:17ff). Jesus as dead Messiah, however, did not create the same

problem as Jesus the living reformer. Whatever tensions existed were not sufficient to cause a full rift; conflicts could be smoothed over in the same way in which Pharisees and Sadducees agreed to disagree over resurrection and life after death and the number of inspired books. We can speak, therefore, of a true continuity between Jewry and the primitive community. Just as Jesus had found place in the life of His people, so the followers of Jesus sensed no compelling reason in the Pentecostal experience to break with their background. They had simply entered upon the age for which Israel had always yearned.

NEWNESS OF LIFE

There was, however, something dynamically new among Jesus' followers. Their prestige was the appeal of vital youth. All around them was the shadow of aging hope; they, however, possessed the glorious substance of hope and the newness of life which only the Messiah could give. Jewry was powerless with the weakness of flesh; the community was strong with the vigor of the Spirit. Many elements of their life, therefore, made them different from their fellow Jews.

First of all, their preaching (the *kerygma*) set them apart. Their one message to all men was the startling truth that the crucified Jesus had risen from the dead and had bestowed the messianic gift par excellence, the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:29-36; 3:12-16). This made Him truly Messiah and Lord, the only source of salvation for all men (cf. Acts 4:8-12; 5:29-32). For those who accepted this truth there was always further instruction drawn not from Jewry but from Jesus. This was known as the "teaching (*didache*) of the apostles" (Acts 2:42).

This brings to light a second distinctive characteristic of the new community. It was no longer the doctors of the Law or the Jewish leaders who taught and directed this group but rather the followers of Jesus who were in a special way the qualified "witnesses of His resurrection" (Acts 1:22; 5:32). The Twelve were now the acknowledged leaders, the chosen chiefs who spoke for the community and suffered for it and proclaimed intransigently all that it stood for.

The distinctiveness of the community was emphasized by a third special mark, its rite

of initiation and its central mystery, "the breaking of bread." Even a circumcised Jew could not belong to this new group unless he professed faith in Jesus as the messianic Son of God and accepted the baptism which resembled the rite of heathen admission into the fold of Israel (Acts 2:38). Continuance in the community meant frequent sacramental contact with the Messiah Lord through the "bread" which He had provided. This was the one mystery which the community kept for itself as its special treasure and as the foretaste of the Lord's imminent return (the *parousia*). For though the followers of Christ prayed in the temple, they "broke bread" in their own homes (Acts 2:42,46). While awaiting the glorious return of the Messiah Lord they found strength and joy in the Bread which was Himself. This was what held them together; sharing in the body of Christ they became themselves that Body which is the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17).

For the primitive community Christ was all in all. The belief of all centered in Him (cf. Rom. 10:9-10); their leaders were men chosen by Him; their very worship meant a sharing in the mystery of His body and blood. Now they awaited anxiously the days of refreshment, the *parousia*, when their judge and king would return to them in glory that they might rejoice with Him forever (Acts 3:20). How much they had yet to learn of God's plan.

PERSECUTION STARTS

The next move was precipitated by the Hellenist Christians. As Oscar Cullmann has shown, these Greek-speaking Jews had always irritated the homelander by their disdain for the physical elements of Israel's worship. Living in the Diaspora they had found God away from the temple and had worshiped Him with a spiritual devotedness which spurned the smell of blood and burning flesh. In coming to know Jesus these Hellenists found the way of spiritual worship wide open to them in the "Temple not made by hands." When Stephen the Hellenist, therefore, spoke of Jesus, his hearers had ears only for that irritating sentence which echoed the old anti-Temple polemic: "Solomon built him a house; yet not in houses made by hands does the Most High dwell" (Acts 7:47-48).

That sentence was the signal for persecu-

tion. If the Jews could tolerate within their own fold men who followed Jesus as the Messiah, they could not stomach fellow-Jews who cast aspersion on the most sacred element of Jewish worship. And so "a great persecution broke out on that day against the Church in Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1). Prosecution left the Galilean apostles untouched. Only Stephen the Hellenist was martyred; and only the Hellenist Christians were driven from their Jerusalem home.

This was a stroke of Providence. By it the Church was forced to seek a home on earth outside of Jewry. The messianic community was to become in fact what it was in nature—the community of the world.

Philip the Hellenist went to Samaria and preached Christ there (Acts 8:4-6). It was a likely place of refuge, for the Samaritans shared the Hellenist opposition to the Jerusalem temple (John 4:20). Other Hellenist Jews went to Antioch where for the first time they extended their apostolate to full-blooded Greeks (Acts 11:19-20). This new move away from Jewry served to emphasize the stress which had been present from the beginning. Christ was all in all for the new community: "They preached the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:20). People sensed the emphasis. They took from it their cue in giving a name to this new group which had arisen in their midst. If Jesus were the Christ, the Messiah, they were Christians, the messianic community: "It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'" (Acts 11:26).

THE NEW ISRAEL

The Church of Christ was expanding. For "church of Christ" it truly was. Israel of old was called the *Qahal* (LXX—*ekklesia*) because it was the assembly of God's chosen people. For the same reason the new Israel was also the Church of God (*ekklesia tou theou*) and even more the Church of Christ, for He was its very life.

As it expanded this Church remained true to itself, taking direction from its leaders, drawing life from its word and sacrament. The story of Philip in Samaria is typical. "He went down to the city of Samaria and preached the Christ to them" (Acts 8:5). . . . "And when they believed Philip as he preached the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). The preach-

ing of the word and the acceptance of the sacrament are both essential in the life of the new community.

Quite as important, however, is the seal of approval from the only ones who could give approval and a full share in the riches of the community's life: "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John. . . . Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14,17).

It is noteworthy how large Peter looms in this whole picture of expanding Christianity as Luke presents it in Acts. He seems to move always in first place as spokesman and representative of the community (Acts 1:15ff; 2:14-36; 3:1-11; 4:8ff; 5:3-11; etc.). There is, however, no blatant note in his claim to authority. He lives and works in a family where everyone knows and loves everyone else. In such surroundings he could fulfill perfectly the behest of Jesus that he who is first should be as he who serves: "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John" (Acts 8:14).

PAUL IS CONVERTED

One Jew was clear-sighted enough to see what it all meant. The new Israel threatened the old; the Christ-Lord of Christianity introduced a raucous note into the *Shema*' faith of Jewry. The soul of Paul, therefore, seethed with the bitterness of Voltaire; *Ecrasez l'infame* became the burning passion of his life. He would stamp out this blasphemy; if need be, he would drown it in the blood of his fellow-Jews.

All this, however, was only the darkness before dawn. On the way to Damascus sunlight burst upon him in a blaze of glory and he heard the stunning words, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). In the twinkling of an eye Paul the hater of Christ became a Christian. The persecutor of the Church became its theologian.

Scholars like Lucien Cerfaux and Alfred Wikenhauser have written long, penetrating analyses of his doctrine on the Church. It would be endless to rehearse their meticulous erudition. We desire instead to center attention on Paul's contribution not as a theologian but as a witness. When he entered the Church, it was already in exist-

ence and fully self-conscious. In his epistles, therefore, we touch the flesh and blood Church of the first generation Christians. These earliest writings of the apostolic period bear glowing testimony to the life of the Church just as Paul found it, just as he knew it must remain.

There is no doubt that this man was a rugged individualist, the keen-sighted theologian of the early Church. In his epistle to the Galatians he is at his unique best, boasting flagrantly that his are the penetrating insights and the God-given message of liberty. The other apostles seem merely to plod along in a pedestrian way: "What they once were matters not to me—God accepts not the person of man" (Gal. 2:6). Indeed, "When Cephas came to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was deserving of blame" (Gal. 2:11). Restricting their view to texts like these Baur and Strauss created the image of a Paul who opposes his gospel to the limited teaching of Peter and the Jewish element in the early Church.

Long ago, however, the Tübingen view of Paul has been discounted as myopic. It was based on Galatians and overlooked the other epistles. And even in Galatians it read only chapter 2 and conveniently forgot that there was also chapter 1.

PAUL THE APOSTLE

There is no doubt that Paul was always conscious of his God-given authority; he is "an apostle sent not from men nor by man but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal. 1:1). This confidence rings in the salutation of all his letters. In making this claim, however, Paul has only one purpose—to validate his right to preach the gospel of Christ.

He considered it his first duty to deliver to others the *kerygma* which had been in the Church from the beginning. Like all the apostles he presented everywhere the saving truths which Matthew had jotted down in Aramaic as an official record of Peter's preaching in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Tim. 2:8). Paul could say to all his converts what he wrote to the Corinthians, "I delivered to you first of all what I myself received" (1 Cor. 15:3).

He knew well that every preacher would try to present the Church's teaching in the most attractive and compelling way he could.

Paul himself theologized to his heart's content. He used the juridical and cultic thought patterns of Jewry; he gave full rein to his knowledge of Stoic diatribe and utilized its antitheses in presenting the Christian message. He insisted, however, that these elucidations were valid only insofar as they presented the authentic Christian message. The preacher might build with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw; but the essential factor consisted always in the foundation of the Church's saving message (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-12).

This teaching of the Church must be safeguarded at any cost. When men showed too much concern with the bric-a-brac of human philosophizing Paul went out of his way to center attention on the fundamental teaching itself. The Corinthians loved a display of "wisdom"; they listened delightfully to the brilliant phrases of Apollo and to his finely spun Alexandrian allegories. Paul sensed danger. Men might come to prefer the tangible beauty of human words to the ineffable power of God's deeds. Paul, therefore, deliberately avoided the brilliance of "wisdom" to present the simple truths which Peter and James and John had recounted on the morrow of Pentecost: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with pretentious speech or wisdom, announcing unto you the witness of Christ. For I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1-2).

TRADITIONAL TEACHING

In every epistle Paul shows his reliance on the traditional teaching which is everywhere the same. Writing to people like the Romans and Colossians whom he has never seen the apostle takes it for granted that they are thoroughly familiar with the truths which he himself is preaching. How often he bases his own doctrinal developments on this presumed knowledge: "Do you not know?" "Have you not heard?" "Do you not remember?" Writing to the Romans Paul takes it for granted that their primitive credal formulary (Rom. 1:3-4) contains the same faith which he himself would express with greater theological exactness (cf. Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:5-11). Writing to the Colossians who had been evangelized not by himself but by Epaphras he simply presumes that they know the Church teaching from which he

himself draws the contents of his instructions (cf. Col. 1:5-7; 2:6-7).

This reliance on the traditional teaching made Paul suspicious of new customs (cf. 1 Cor. 11-16) and intransigently hostile to distortions of the primitive gospel. He was speaking of false teachers when he wrote: "If anyone destroys the temple of God, him will God destroy; for holy is the temple of God, and this temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:17).

This witness to the unchanging teaching of the Church is the first factor one must reckon with if he wishes to share Paul's mind on the Church. He who is looked upon as the most creative of the apostles, the artisan of Christian theology, places his chief glory in being "approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel" (1 Thes. 2:4). In the traditional teaching which is always and everywhere the same Paul sees a dynamic power to save (Rom. 1:16-17). Through the Church message the risen Christ was able to enter the heart of every man to save and to sanctify.

THAT CHRIST BE PREACHED

Paul therefore could write to the Thessalonians in the first letter of his long correspondence: "We give thanks to God without ceasing, because when you heard and received from us the word of God, you welcomed it not as the word of men but, as it truly is, the word of God, who works in you who believed" (1 Thes. 2:13). So long as the message was presented accurately and integrally Christ could do His work. When, therefore, the imprisoned Paul learned that others were busy preaching the gospel in order to curry favor with the new converts, he cried out, "What of it? Provided only that in every way, whether for sincere or insincere motives, Christ is being proclaimed; in this I rejoice, yes, and I shall rejoice" (Phil. 1:18).

His mind is crystal clear. Christian life comes from a gospel message which is fixed and credal and dynamically powerful. For Paul faith is not the fideism of blind surrender to an unknown God as it would be in the systems of Rudolph Bultmann and Paul Tillich. Paul's faith instead is dependent on the spoken word and reaches God truly through surrender to its conceptual element. For the gospel is a mirror held up to the heart of God that it may reflect His thoughts into the heart of man

(cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). As an apostle, therefore, Paul considered it his prime duty to witness and to transmit, not to create: "Let a man so account us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now here it is required in stewards that a man be found trustworthy" (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

The apostle's concept of sacramentality is a second factor which one must keep in mind in order to share his understanding of the Church. Scholars of the Lausanne school have suggested that for Paul salvation consisted in a mere psychological assent to the salvific deed of Calvary proclaimed by the gospel. In that event God's intervention at Calvary would have no greater efficacy than His divine intervention on Sinai; and once more man would be left to himself and to his own devices.

Paul's teaching, on the other hand, presupposes that the believer is really and effectively united to the risen Christ as body-person to body-person (*soma to soma*) in the sacramental rites of baptism and the eucharist. For Paul, Christ did not speak in a metaphor when, on the way to Damascus, he complained, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

SACRAMENTAL LIFE

The first time that Paul clearly asserts the realism of sacramental life in the Church is when he chooses to challenge an ugly problem on the level of its own realism. Christians of Corinth had fallen back into fornication, into commingling of body with body not merely as a physical experience but as a full personal interchange of thought and affection. Paul opposes the sin by appealing to another bond which the Christian has already contracted, the well-known bond between his person and the person of the glorified Christ which is as real as the union between a man and a harlot: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?" (1 Cor. 6:15).

In both cases the full person is involved in a real way. For Paul the Hebrew the word "body" does not have the same meaning as in our twentieth century western vocabulary. Instead of denoting the physical part of the body-soul composite (as with us), the word "body" in Paul's vocabulary signifies the whole reality of man as an ani-

mated and personalized body living a fully human life. When, therefore, he speaks of the Christian's union with Christ his thought is very realistic. He sees all Christians as completing and extending one and the same person and life, Christ Himself.

This first allusion to the body of Christ is incidental, the emergent of a given context. Yet it has a validity all its own because it expresses so aptly the realism of the Christian's union with Christ as Paul sees it and as he, or his disciple, will express it later in the consummate synthesis of his thought in Eph. 5:25-32 where he likens the union of Christ and His Church to the bond between a devoted husband and wife. No union could be more intimate, because no dependence could be more complete. All that the Christian has as a Christian he receives in the total surrender of his body-person to the body-person of Christ: "You are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us God-given wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

THE BODY OF CHRIST

This union begins at baptism, as Paul indicates in Gal. 3:27-28. Though shifting his thought pattern he maintains the dynamic realism of the Christian experience: "All you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The analogy is drawn from the action of putting on a garment; but, as G. Duncan points out, "In Scripture it denotes that the wearer becomes in a subtle way identified with what he puts on. The present text shows how intimate is the identification it evokes. For Paul goes on to affirm that in the psycho-somatic rite of baptism the body-person (*soma*) of the Christian is so totally surrendered to Christ that whatever is merely "flesh" disappears, so that "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one person (masculine) in Christ Jesus."

Paul therefore teaches clearly that Christian life involves a real and personal union between the individual Christian and the glorified Christ, a union in which the Christian depends so completely upon Christ that He alone functions as the directive spiritual force: "He who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Cor. 6:17).

This same realism prevails when Paul comes to speak of Christians as a collectivity

in his discussion of the Eucharist. Once more the point of departure for his memorable statement is a particular problem, the danger of syncretism arising from sharing in the banquets of pagan worship. The apostle declares that such conduct is incompatible with the celebration of the Christian supper which joins the Christian to Christ: "The bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. 10:16).

As proof of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist Paul appeals to a fact which carried a barbed thrust to the disunited Corinthians. He recalls the truth which was recognized from the beginning: the remarkable fellowship (*koinonia*) of Christians with one another has its total cause in the fellowship (*koinonia*) of each individual with Christ in the breaking of the bread: "Because the bread is one, we though many are one body, we who partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). In this text the "one body" is still the individual body-person of the risen Christ. The many are one body because the "one bread" makes each one concorporeal with Christ.

THE EUCHARIST

In the realism of Paul's thought, both baptism and the Eucharist enable Christ to become "all in all," the one source and only center of Christian life. Dr. Rawlinson, therefore, is on firm ground when he emphasizes the importance of the Eucharist as a prime element in shaping Paul's doctrine on the Church as the body of Christ.

For Paul, then, the Church was not merely a society founded by Christ to endure forever as the best way of saving men. It was far more the enduring sacrament of Christ's abiding presence among men, the real and permanent means He has chosen to fulfill His promise, "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

The Apostle constantly witnesses to this reality and permanence of Christ's presence in and through the Church. He likens the Church to a temple where God dwells and where His Son gives Him ceaseless praise (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16). He affirms that Christ cherishes the Church just as a devoted husband loves and cherishes his wife (Eph. 5:28-32). He is most expressive, however, when he speaks of the Church as the

"body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:4-5; Col. 1:24; 2:19; *etc.*).

For Paul, Christ is "all in all." Whether he speaks of the individual Christian, the local congregation, or the whole Church, Paul sees all as belonging to the body of Christ, as completing and extending the person and life of the risen Christ Himself. For the Savior living gloriously in heaven is Himself the Body-Person, the one central figure with whom all Christians are intimately united and on whom they totally depend. In Paul's classic phrase they are "in Christ Jesus"—precisely because He is in them, as the total source of all spiritual life in the Church. "Here (in the Church) is no more Gentile and Jew, no more circumcised and uncircumcised; no one is barbarian, or Scythian, no one is slave or free man; there is nothing but Christ in any of us" (Col. 3:11).

AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

The Apostle's doctrine on the Church as the body of Christ gives special force to his teaching on authority. It is difficult to understand why Anders Nygren has spoken only of Paul's doctrine on the word and on the sacrament in his excellent monograph, *Christ and His Church*. The truth is that from the very beginning of his epistolary correspondence Paul shows a vital awareness of the function of authority in the Church.

He glories in his apostleship and boasts of his power because he knows well that the apostle is a *shaliah*—one sent by Christ with the fullness of his authority: "On behalf of Christ, therefore, we are acting as ambassadors, God, as it were, making appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:20). This consciousness of bearing the authority of Christ was with Paul always and everywhere. He acted with complete liberty and aplomb whether he enjoined commands on those who were present or leveled threats against those who were absent. This confidence never failed him for he looked on himself always as the representative of Christ: "I have already warned, when present, and now in my absence I warn again those who sinned before, and all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare. Do you seek a proof of the Christ who speaks in me, who is not weak in your regard, nay, is powerful in you? . . . We also shall live with him through the power of God in your regard" (2 Cor. 13:2-4).

Paul recognized this same authority in other leaders of the Church. For it is clear in his epistles that others ruled the local churches during the absence of their father and founder. As in Judaism itself, elders (*presbyteroi*) were chosen to direct the conduct of the community. Besides this group—and probably selected from among them—certain administrators (*episcopoi*) were empowered to watch over the needs of the community and to preside at its liturgical assemblies. From the very beginning Paul enjoined obedience to these men of authority (1 Thes. 5:12-13). The fact that they discharged their duties in the Church, the body of Christ, made the exercise of their authority a function of Christ Himself (*cf.* 1 Cor. 12:27-28; Rom. 12:4,8).

As time went on, Paul would share more and more of his own power with subaltern officers, men like Titus and Timothy. What belonged to the apostles eminently, the unique power of theirs which shaded all lesser authority, became more and more the possession of the local overseers. Yet even in the period of the Pastoral Epistles the local authorities had not yet received the full power of the monarchical Bishop in St. Ignatius' letters. This would become necessary only when death brought an end to Paul's over-all regency.

PETER'S AUTHORITY

There is also, of course, the crucial question of Peter's authority. What did Paul think of it? He has never answered this question, simply because he writes out of a living tradition where Peter's role was taken for granted. His casual remarks, however, shed an aura of light about Peter as someone special in the ruling body of the Church.

After his conversion Paul paid a courtesy visit to Jerusalem—to see Peter (Gal. 1:18). Later in his apostolate at Antioch he was greatly disturbed when Cephas, of all people, placed a principle in jeopardy by discrimination against the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14). At Corinth Paul has to accept the fact that one of the dissenting groups centered its loyalty on Peter, as though he had as much right to that loyalty as Paul and Apollo, the founders of the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:12). For Paul as for the others Peter stands in a category of his own: "Have we not the right to take about with us a woman,

as do the other apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. 9:15; cf. 15:5).

Paul's letters, therefore, reflect authentically what the rest of the Church thought about Peter. If he has left no formal proof of Peter's authority it is because, as Père Benoit has pointed out, this truth was a universally accepted part of the Church's life.

This long discussion of Paul's witness to the existence and nature of the Church finds its warrant in the uniqueness of his testimony. First, his epistles stand as the earliest extant record of everyday life in the Christian community (between 50 and 67 A.D.). Secondly they come from a man who first knew Christianity as an unbeliever and a persecutor and who forfeited many privileges to accept its claim (cf. Phil. 3:3-8). Thirdly, the Church life he describes was being lived in persecuted communities who, like Paul himself, would have had everything to gain by reverting to earlier religious loyalties. Fourthly, Paul's value as a witness is all the more significant since it is so easy to distinguish it from his role as an original and creative thinker. His testimony, therefore, is not only a faithful transcript of life and practice in the Church but also a guarantee of its historical claim. A man of Paul's character and background would have been the last one in the world to "create" Christianity.

APOSTOLIC WRITINGS AGREE

Other apostolic writings come from a later period; but their witness to the constituent elements of Church life matches the pattern of Paul's testimony. The Johannine writings, for instance, though coming from the traditions of Asia Minor, are in perfect agreement with Paul's portrait of the Church. In them we find the same tenacious emphasis on the unchanging word (1 John 1:3; 2:27; 2 John 8-11) and on the true authority of those who watch over the Church: "He who knows God listens to us; he who is not of God does not listen to us" (1 John 4:6). The whole Johannine gospel is a witness to the sacramental sources of the Church's life.

Another independent witness may be found in the Greek gospel of Matthew. Coming from the latter part of the first century this gospel presents a delineation

of the Church as its distinctive cachet. It emphasizes the role and authority of the Petrine office even at a time when Peter was himself already dead (Matt. 16:17-20), the power of the Church leaders (Matt. 18:15-18), the presence of Christ in the liturgical assembly (Matt. 18:19-20), the unchanging firmness of the Church's word (Matt. 7:24-27). Moreover, "by transposing a saying of Jesus regarding the Mystery of the Kingdom (cf. Mk. 4:11), Matthew shows his awareness that the Church in his day already possessed a body of doctrines that had been entrusted to the apostolic magisterium: 'to you the knowledge of the mysteries of the heavenly Kingdom has been confided'" (13:11).

CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS

Acts, Paul, John, Matthew—all the apostolic writings witness to the Word, the Sacrament, and Authority as constituent elements in the life of the Church. What connection does it all have with the Jesus of history? Some find it difficult to read the thought of the Church back into the mind of Jesus; the really impossible thing is to read it out of His mind. For if the Church did not come from Jesus, we are faced with the anomaly of an effect without a cause.

It is true, all that we know of Jesus comes from the Church of the first century, from writers who already believed in Him as the Risen Savior and the messianic Son of God. These records and memories, however, come from men who not only believed in Him but had also lived with Him. They were well qualified to judge whether the *kerygma* of the apostles misrepresented the facts of history. If, therefore, they became members of the Church and accepted its teaching and sacraments and leaders, it is only because they were convinced that the structure of the Church rested four-square on the foundation which the apostles affirmed was of Jesus' own making.

During His lifetime He had presented Himself in the role of Daniel's Son of Man (Dan. 7) and of Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Is. 53). He was, therefore—in the light of this composite picture—a corporate personality, a Son of Man who embodies the "saints of God" (cf. Dan. 7:13-14 with Dan. 7:25-27), a Suffering Servant who gives His life "for the many" (Is. 53:11-12). His death and glorification involved all; His fate would

have weighty meaning in the lives of others. In the days of His earthly life, therefore, He took care to provide for the world-family which would come into being through the power of His resurrection.

If He had not actually made such preparations, the Jews of Jerusalem (who were eyewitnesses of His life) would have been the first to reject the apostles' false claims. They had everything to lose and nothing to gain in accepting a merely fabricated Pentecostal message. This first generation of Jewish Christians, therefore, offers an irrefragable argument for the intimate bond between the Church of Pentecost and the Jesus of history.

It is only His choice and preparation that can explain why these first Christians turned from the learned doctors of the Law whom they had always venerated to accept the religious leadership of ignorant Galilean fishermen whose very background disqualified them from all doctrinal or religious authority.

It is only the teaching of Jesus, illumined

and corroborated by His resurrection, that can explain why men accepted a Word which not only altered the cardinal tenet of the *Shema* but also cut through the maze of respected rabbinical doctrine to deep underlying principles (*ap arches*) which only the Creator of the Law could lay bare.

It is only the institution of Jesus that can explain why Jews who gloried in circumcision could come to restrict salvation to a rite which resembled the baptism previously required only of heathen converts to Judaism. It is also only an act of Jesus that can explain why these same Jews chose the Christian "breaking of bread" as their true and only Passover celebration.

In His lifetime, therefore, Jesus prepared for the future life of His Church by choosing its leaders, by providing it with Sacraments, and by ministering the word which would form the heart of its teaching. Were this not so, the image of the primitive Church which looms so large and clear in the apostolic writings would remain forever an inexplicable anomaly.

READING I'VE LIKED

The theme of Redemption is one of the theological questions that has been enriched by study and reflection in recent years. Many a veteran instructor needs to revise his presentation of this mystery. "*What Is Redemption?*" by Philippe De La Trinite, O.C.D. (Hawthorn Books Inc., \$3.50) will provide a wealth of material on this subject.

Father Jean Danielou set out to write "a kind of Summa" on the Incarnate Word. The result is *Christ and Us*, and it does not disappoint. In brilliant, succinct manner he touches on most of the facets of this sublime mystery. (Sheed and Ward. \$3.95).

It isn't every specialist who can bring wit and an engaging style to his writings. Father Leonard Johnston is able to combine all these qualities in his books on scripture. *Witnesses to God*, is clearly one of the best popular books on the bible, and it should be a "must" for you and your inquirers. Catholic study clubs might well employ it as a text. (Sheed & Ward. \$3.50).

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GUIDE

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Guide Lights

DOCUMENTING A DATE . . .

The following is the text of the document issued by Pope John XXIII announcing October 11 as the opening date of the Second Vatican Council.

"On December 25, 1961, through the apostolic constitution 'Humane Salutis,' We set the holding of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council for the current year, translating into action a decision that had matured in Our heart for a long time and satisfying at the same time the common expectation of the Catholic world.

"At the present time, after careful consideration and to give participants in the council an opportunity to arrange everything in time, We have reached a decision to set the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council for the 11th day of October next.

"We have especially chosen this date because it links us with the memory of the great Council of Ephesus, which was of extreme importance in the history of the Church.

"With the approach of such a solemn assembly, We can do no less than exhort once more all Our sons, together with all the clergy and the Christian people who await it with great anticipation, to intensify ever more their prayers to God for the happy success of this undertaking, in which We are engaged together with Our venerable brothers and beloved sons who are directly occupied in the preparatory work for the council itself.

"The fruits which We ardently desire from this celebration are principally that the Church, Spouse of Christ, may strengthen still more her divine energies and extend her beneficial influence in still greater measure to the minds of men.

"In this way there is further reason to hope that all people—especially those whom we so sorrowfully see suffering because of misfortunes, discord and mournful conflicts—turning their eyes more trustfully toward Christ, 'a light of revelation to the gentiles,' may finally achieve true peace in respect for mutual rights and duties.

"After mature deliberation, and in virtue of Our apostolic authority, We therefore establish and decree that the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council will begin on the 11th day of October of the current year.

Given in Rome at St. Peter's, February 2,

1962, the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the fourth year of Our pontificate."

WARNING IN WESTMINSTER . . .

In a sermon delivered in Westminster Cathedral, London, William Cardinal Godfrey said it would be a mistake to focus all attention about the coming council on the question of Christian unity. He said, "From my experience of the work of the Central Commission I can say that a great variety of questions has been discussed—doctrinal, moral and disciplinary, many of which have no direct bearing on the unity of Christendom."

The Cardinal stated that what the Pope hopes and prays for is that the spectacle of unity of worship professed by over 500 million Christians under one head may lead others to study the life of the Church. In this way they may be led closer to the Apostolic See and eventually to accept its claims.

He added, "The Pope has said that the council will take place against a background of militant atheism. Christian unity would be the most powerful asset in countering this spirit of aggressive unbelief which strives to undermine the faith that has been the foundation and inspiration of our culture and civilization."

EPISCOPALIAN ECHO . . .

The Most Reverend Arthur C. Lichtenberger, Presiding Bishop of the National Council of the Episcopal Church also pointed out that the purposes of the council were primarily internal. He was speaking at a session of the Council in Greenwich, Connecticut, and describing his meeting with Pope John. He said he had experienced "a great lift after being in his presence," and praised the Pope for his "openness, simplicity, and humanity."

While Bishop Lichtenberger declined to quote the Pope directly, indicating he felt this would be discourteous, he said that the meeting lasted forty minutes, during which the conversation was warm, friendly, and unrestrained. He called false previously quoted reports that he had indicated that the Episcopalians would be unwilling to send observers unless other churches were invited.

INSIDE INFORMATION . . .

Inside Information is a regular feature of *Information Magazine*. In the February issue there was an interesting item concerning observers. It said that Communist quarters in Rome are circulating talk to the effect that the Russian Orthodox Church will be invited and that Khrushchev may bestow his blessing on such a delegation.

The report stated that the basis for the Communist rumors apparently is Khrushchev's recent initiatives toward the Holy Father: the dictator's "praise" of Mater et Magistra and his birthday message to the Pontiff. Also certain to have been decided in Moscow is the announcement that the Red Hungarian government is willing to "negotiate" the status of Cardinal Josef Mindszenty.

"Such overtures," says *Information*, "are scant reason to place much faith in the unpredictable Khrushchev and his 'peace maneuvers.'" A few people in Rome are saying that the Moscow Church may want to attend the Council to be 'a new Judas among the Apostles.'"

DISCUSSION ON DEACONS . . .

Another report from Rome, more dignified than mere rumor, says that the Central Preparatory Commission has studied the ancient office of deacon including the idea of a married diaconate. A Vatican radio broadcast pointed out that Papal teachings on the diaconate, considered as an ecclesiastical function independent of the priesthood, had been studied by the Commission, "which respects tradition" and is "aware of the difficulties" encountered by priests overburdened with pastoral cares.

The broadcast explained that the Commission analyzed aspects of the Sacrament of Holy Orders with the question in mind whether some duties of the priesthood might be modified to cope with modern requirements. "The possibility has not been excluded," it said, "that certain institutions enforced during the early centuries of the Church might well be revived for the purpose of satisfying modern pastoral needs."

HIGH CHURCH HIGH HOPES . . .

There have been many optimistic statements on Church unity of late. *The American Church News*, the official magazine of the American Church Union, printed the following.

"We thank the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church for his courtesy in paying a visit to Pope John XXIII, following the

example of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Geoffrey Fisher. Official statements and actions which indicate a growing desire for closer fellowship both with Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church point to a new day in unity efforts. For several centuries Episcopalians have been largely preoccupied with Protestant federation plans as far as unity matters were concerned. It is entirely understandable that during that period any type of Catholic reunion seemed remote. But the events of the past few months—approaches to the Greek Orthodox Catholic Churches, and their warm response; closer relations and the implementing of our Concordat with the Old Catholic Churches and the Polish National Catholic Church; the approval of a concordat with the Philippine Independent Catholic Church and the combination of official visits on a high level and unofficial conversations and discussions between Anglicans and Roman Catholics in many parts of the world turn our thoughts with renewed hopes to the possibility of the eventual unity of the more than 90% of the Christians in the world who hold to Catholic Faith and Order, the 'faith once delivered to the saints.'"

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS . . .

On October 22, 1961 there were 744 missionary jurisdictions in the world, with forty million Catholics and four million catechumens. Between September, 1960, and September 1961, forty-two bishops were appointed to strictly missionary jurisdictions.

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